Letters to the editor

Keep City Hall

Dear Editor:

Major Lee White's plan to attract new industries to Carbondale (see "Carbondale will 'die' unless changes are made," THE CARBONDALE NEWS, Wednesday, June 22, 1981, p. 1) by developing an industrial park in the old Delaware & Hudson Railroad yard is, I believe, a good idea.

A committee should at one contact the Delaware & Hudson Railroad and make arrangements to buy the Delaware & Hudson Railroad yard for an industrial plant. Having a building shell (or shells) ready for potential industrial prospects would, doubtless, be regarded by those prospects as a very positive indication of Carbondale's interest in having new industries locate in the area.

Industrial parks, building shells, adequate rail facilities, and other physical amenities, however, are not enough to attract industrial prospects to Carbondale. Nor are the other positive physical and environmental amenities of the Carbondale area (good schools, numerous churches, abundant recreational facilities, salubrious environment) sufficient to attract industrial prospects to Carbondale.

What is needed, in addition to all of the factors enumerated above, is a positive and healthy psychological environment in which industrial prospects can not only establish themselves but also grow.

As you have been pointing out in the pages of THE CARBONDALE NEWS, a great many of the people in the Carbondale area are very complacent in their general outlook. They are very content with the way things are. They do not act. They merely react.

Major Lee White proposes that action be taken, and I applaud his telling the Carbondale Area Chamber of Commerce -- and by extension the citizens of Carbondale -- that it is up to them to take action. I do not, however, endorse one of the actions that Major Lee White proposes in order to attract industry to Carbondale, namely, to pull down City Hall.

To quote White's comments:

"The people should be sick to death of the looks of the town!" White continued, "There's no enthusiasm. No pride. You must get pride. You must change your image."

When asked specifically what he disliked about Carbondale's appearance, White answered, "Well, the first thing I think of is City Hall. It's a disgrace. Someone should put a rope around it and pull it down! You have a lot of empty store-fronts, but they can be filled if you get the economy turned around."

To pull down City Hall in Carbondale would be a mistake with disastrous consequences. Far from attracting industry to Carbondale, to pull down City Hall would, in fact, discourage industry from locating in Carbondale. What does such an act (pulling down City Hall) tell a potential industrial prospect?

It tells that prospect that Carbondale has no respect for its past, that Carbondale is not interested in preserving its past, that Carbondale, concomitantly, has no faith in its future.

Carbondale's City Hall is a symbol of the health and strength of Carbondale when Carbondale was a vigorous industrial location. That health and that strength still radiate from City Hall, notwithstanding the less than serious signs of age that can be noted in the building. City Hall is a symbol of civic pride, of industrial health, of faith in the future. Such a building was not erected for the use of one generation or five generations. Such a building was built for all generations, for all time.

City Hall is not only a symbol of what Carbondale once was, City Hall is also an embodiment of what Carbondale can be again. To preserve City Hall is to proclaim, implicity, to all potential industrial prospects that Carbondale has a great deal of respect for its past, that Carbondale is very interested in preserving its past, and that Carbondale, concomitantly, has a great deal of faith in its future.

Sincerely yours,
S. Robert Powell
Carbondale